

# Specialized Responders Train for Disasters

*Posted: Oct 07, 2011 9:15 PM CDT>Updated: Oct 07, 2011 10:01 PM CDT>*

By Mike McDaniel - email



RANKIN COUNTY, MS (WLBT) -

It's a scenario they hope never happens in Mississippi, but if it does they'll be ready.

Cary Sallis, Oxford Fire Dept. says, "We've got a simulated mine collapse with victims down inside."

They're part of the state's search and rescue task force, made up of folks from emergency departments across the state and the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security is putting them to the test.

Thompson says, "The more you practice or exercise then the more proficient you become."

J.W. Ledbetter, Executive Director of MS Office of Homeland Security says, "when you exercise like this, you hone your skills, you identify ways to improve your response, you get familiar with your equipment and you get familiar with working together."

The four days of exercises simulate major incidents like search and rescue following a natural or terrorist-made disaster as well as individual search and rescue operations. More than 200 responders from the state's three search and rescue divisions are going through the training, which is the first of its kind in Mississippi where teams are challenged against one another.

Ledbetter says, "It says we're ready. It says we're prepared, we're ready, we can handle another Katrina, we can handle another whatever comes up."

Danny Manley, Public Information Officer says, "This is for Mississippi responders to take care of Mississippi."

Equipped with technical skills, those responders will take their training back to their departments

Bobby Storey, Task Force One Leader, says, "Collectively we come together. It makes us stronger in the end."

And when disaster strikes, they'll be ready for search and rescue, whether the victims are above ground or below.

"There's one over there that's unburied and we've got one behind us, kind of behind me that's under about a thousand pounds of rubble."

Whatever the case, the true test comes in real life, but until then scenes like this are the next best thing. Fisher says, "If you don't train then you're not going to be able to help people out the way that we're supposed to."

Sallis says, "It's good to have this type of training so if something happens we've got a specialized team that can go in and handle these situations."

Copyright 2011 WLBT. All rights reserved. <http://www.wlbt.com/story/15646185/responder-training>